What is claimed is:

1. For a semiconductor device that includes a semiconductor die having a circuit side and bulk silicon in an back side opposite the circuit side, a method for detecting a defect at a surface in the die, comprising:

locating a first beam splitter for optical manipulation relative to the back side of the semiconductor die;

directing light of a known wavelength at the beam splitter, wherein the first beam splitter is adapted to direct a first beam of light into the back side of the semiconductor die which reflects a second beam of light back;

redirecting the second beam to a second beam splitter, the second beam splitter generating third and fourth beams of light; and

analyzing the third and fourth beams of light, including comparing a relational factor that is a function of the two beams of light with a reference and detecting therefrom a surface defect in the die.

2. A method, according to claim 1, further including using the first and second beam splitters to generate different third and fourth beams from a nondefective semiconductor and analyzing the different third and fourth beams of light to develop the reference.

3. A method, according to claim 2, wherein the back side of the semiconductor die reflects the second beam of light back to the first beam splitter, and wherein the relational factor is a function of a time differential, or intensity, between the first and second beams of light.

4. A method, according to claim 3, further including thinning the back side of the die before the steps of claim 1.

5. A method, according to claim 4, wherein thinning the back side of the die includes locally thinning a portion of the back side of the die.

6. A method, according to claim 4, wherein thinning the back side of the die includes locally thinning a portion of the back side of the die to a thickness of less than about 20 microns.

7. A method, according to claim 1, wherein the light of a known wavelength is near infra-red light.

8. A method, according to claim 1, wherein the relational factor is a function of a time differential, or intensity, between the first and second beams of light.

9. A method, according to claim 1, wherein the back side of the die into which the beam of light is directed has a thickness of at least about 20 microns.

10. A system for detecting a defect in a semiconductor device that includes a semiconductor die having a circuit side and bulk silicon in an back side opposite the circuit side, comprising:

first beam splitter means for beam splitting and adapted for optical manipulation relative to the back side of the semiconductor die;

laser means for directing light of a known wavelength at the first beam splitter means, wherein the first beam splitter means is adapted to direct a first beam of light into the back side of the semiconductor die which reflects a second beam of light;

second beam splitter means for generating third and fourth beams of light in response to the second beam being a redirected; and

means for analyzing the third and fourth beams of light, including means for comparing a relational factor that is a function of the two beams of light with a reference and detecting therefrom a surface defect in the die.

11. A system for detecting a defect in a semiconductor device that includes a semiconductor die having a circuit side and bulk silicon in an back side opposite the circuit side, comprising:

a first beam splitter adapted for optical manipulation relative to the back side of the semiconductor die;

a laser for directing light of a known wavelength at the first beam splitter, wherein the first beam splitter means is adapted to direct a first beam of light into the back side of the semiconductor die which reflects a second beam of light back;

a second beam splitter for generating third and fourth beams of light in response to the second beam being a redirected; and

a processor adapted for analyzing the third and fourth beams of light, including comparing a relational factor that is a function of the two beams of light with a reference and detecting therefrom a surface defect in the die.

12. A system, according to claim 11, wherein the back side of the semiconductor die reflects the second beam of light back to the first beam splitter.

13. A system, according to claim 11, wherein the laser is a YAG laser.

14. A system, according to claim 11, further including means for thinning the back side of the die.

15. A system, according to claim 11, wherein the laser is a YAG laser, and further including means for thinning the back side of the die.

16. A system, according to claim 11, wherein the relational factor is a function of a time differential, or intensity, between the first and second beams of light.